

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 25

Dennis Pope, Superintendent

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Final Report

July 10, 2001

Visit Conducted on:

March 8-9, 2001

Team Members:

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Sherry Corbett, Special Education Coordinator
Christine Reinhart, Special Education Teacher
Clair Pstragowski, Principal
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Students with Disabilities & IDEA 97
(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 25

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at SAU 25 comprised of the following schools: Bedford Preschool Program, Peter Woodbury School, Bedford Memorial School, McKelvie Middle School, Riddle Brook School and West High School. The visiting team met on March 8-9, 2001 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards and IDEA 97 have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on May 23-24, 1995.*

The findings of noncompliance resulting from the visit of 1995 were as follows:

- Maintaining current student information in the SPEDIS System.
- Limited clerical assistance for special education process.
- Educational services for secondary students at West High School
- The number of students placed out of district.

• SPEDIS DATA

The importance of maintaining accurate and current information in SPEDIS appears to have been corrected by the special education administration. The responsibility for carrying out this assignment has been clearly specified and position accountability has been determined.

• CLERICAL ASSISTANCE

Although some progress has occurred during the past five years the need for addressing the problem of assistance for teachers is of concern at the Peter Woodbury School and at the West High School

• EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AT WEST HIGH SCHOOL

The addition of teachers and paraprofessionals for Bedford students has improved the quality of education at West High School significantly. These improvements are manifested in organized programs with clearly structured procedures, evidence of student progress, support from content teachers, student centered transition to post high school careers and parent satisfaction with staff access and responsiveness. However, there remain a few program improvements which need continue to warrant attention including clerical support, telephones for internal and external business and private work space for meeting with parents and students. Other issues impacting on educational quality which are the responsibility of the administration of West High School are establishing an in

school suspension program, developing an effective system for hiring substitutes and providing the means for Manchester teachers to attend student team meetings.

- **NUMBER OF STUDENTS PLACED OUT OF DISTRICT**

Dealing with this issue has been of concern to the administration for some years. Typically it has been the unwritten practice to grant parental requests for out of district placements when these appear to have some merit. The result continues to be a higher than expected number of placements than in the typical student cohort. The costs for legal services and parental resentment are a price the district does not appear to be willing to exact in some of these cases. However, when teams determine that out of district placements are clearly not in the interests of the students the district will stand firm and advocate strongly for its placement recommendation.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The review of special education programming and services of the Bedford School District resulted in many positive comments from all team members. A consistent investment in public education by the citizens of Bedford has established quality education for the children and youth of the community. The citations of non-compliance noted at each school do not in total represent any particular issue of significance on which the district needs to focus its resources. Implementation of the district's long-range plan will result in the continuing provision of quality education for all students including those with disabilities.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school board and Superintendent of schools are commended for developing the district's long-range plan and for consistently proposing to the citizens of the community the resources necessary for quality education.
- The Superintendent of schools is commended for providing the leadership necessary for the operation of an effective school system.
- The district is commended for developing Dimensions of Quality, a public document reporting indices of quality in the Bedford Schools.
- The Director of Special Education is commended for her leadership and organizational effectiveness. She has the requisite skills and experience to continue to improve the quality of educational experiences for students with disabilities in the Bedford School District.
- The Director of Special Education is commended for developing an excellent policy and procedure manual for the Bedford School District. Its exceptional clarity and logical organization make it a model for other districts.
- Teachers are commended for their instructional competence and skills of collaboration. Their ability to work together in the interest of children was high point of the visit.

CITATIONS

See individual school summaries

SUGGESTIONS:

See individual school summaries

Bedford Preschool Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 FILES

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are hard working, dedicated and work together as a team.
- The program has a strong philosophy of meeting the needs of all students.
- Files were organized and contained good documentation.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.02(d) 1 file: lacked evidence of written notice within 15 days of referral.

Ed. 1109.11 1 file: lacked evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP progress.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider looking into community programs as placement option to help maintain a 50/50 ratio at the district program and provide more options for children.

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 FILES

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room 3) Skills Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is evidence of ongoing communication between all staff members involved with each student. This kind of communication is supported by the administration.
- Students with disabilities feel a part of the regular classroom.
- Staff are highly committed.
- Occupational therapy is available at each school.
- Regular classroom teachers are provided with at least 5 hours of special education training.
- Weekly meetings between special educators and regular classroom teachers to discuss their various needs is beneficial.
- Paraprofessionals are respected members of the team.
- Files were in excellent order.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.03(a) 1 file: lacked evidence that teacher certified in the area of suspected disability attended the evaluation team meeting or IEP meeting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The district may want to consider providing additional space for growing programs.
- Special education and regular education staff would benefit from additional special education training.
- Secretarial services for special education staff would be of assistance.

Bedford Memorial School

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Sills Program 2) K-5

COMMENDATIONS:

- Files were very organized with documents easy to locate.
- The team is very supportive of students and each other.
- The school supports a strong philosophy of meeting individual student needs.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.11 1 file: lacked evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP progress.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Before creating less inclusive programs for special education students one of the factors necessary to consider is the impact separation may have on student performance and success.

McKelvie Middle School

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Support Program 2) Skills Program 3) Integration Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is excellent ongoing communication among administration, parents, regular and special education staff.
- The school provides an overall positive learning environment for all students.
- The needs of special education students are effectively and efficiently met in the three distinct programs.
- The special education facilitator and assessment specialists allow time for special education teachers to focus on instruction and direct services.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.03 3 files: Team member role identification was not consistently indicated for evaluation
Ed. 1107.03 and IEP meetings.
Ed. 1107.08

Ed. 1109.04 1 file: lacked evidence that parents provided 10-day notice of IEP meeting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Related service consults could be more distinctive in the student progress review.

Riddle Brook School

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Integration Program 2) Skills Improvement 3) Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are outstanding and work together as a team.
- There is a wide variety of programs and an abundance of teaching materials.
- Administration is supportive of staff and programs.
- Programs are fully staffed with an evaluator and technology coordinator in each building.
- Secretarial support for special education staff is excellent.
- Professional days – curriculum days.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.08 1 file: duration of IEP is longer than 12 months with 3 extensions documented.
1 file: duration of IEP is longer than 12 months with 2 extensions documented.

SUGGESTIONS:

None

West High School

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Skills Improvement 2) Behavioral Skill Program
3) Language Based Skills 2000

COMMENDATIONS:

- Programs are well organized with clearly structured procedures and strategies to meet goals.
- Staff are dedicated to student centered programs and collegial support.
- Parents emphasized staff accessibility and responsiveness to student and parent concerns.
- Regular education teachers report strong support from special education teachers.
- Students demonstrated measurable progress over the years in skills that can be generalized in the classroom post secondary education and jobs.
- The high school special education coordinator has in depth knowledge and involvement in programs, student issues and support of special education staff.
- Files are well organized with and index and durable binders.
- Staff demonstrate a clear mission to emphasize student centered transition including post secondary education and career. Students are encouraged to be involved in the process and demonstrate knowledge of their disability and how it impacts their education.
- There is a solid working liaison with other agencies, schools and out of district coordinator.
- High school assistant principal works closely with special education coordinator to ensure appropriate disciplinary consequences and follow through.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR 300.344 1 file: lacked evidence of other agency participation in IEP meeting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The special education department could use the assistance of clerical support.
- Consider providing teachers with improved access to telephones for out of school contact.
- Teachers need private workspace for preparation and conferencing with students, parents and team planning. Additional help is needed for cognitive evaluations.
- There is a need for an in school suspension program.
- There is no centralized system to hire substitutes. The responsibility is left to the absent teacher. Teacher assistants are used as substitutes in teacher absences
- Manchester teacher contract constraints make it difficult to schedule teachers for team meetings. They do not attend before or after school meetings. Teacher assistants cover for teachers during the day, leaving resource room short staffed.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 25

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

SAU 25

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 FILES

COMMENDATIONS:

- James O files are thorough and contain all required information. The files are very well organized with easy access to information.
- The Special Education Administrator responsible for students who are part of the Consent Decree is fully informed and acquainted with the details of each case.